“Remember Who You Are:” The British Kindertransports of World War II

Undergraduate Research Thesis

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by

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Introduction

The Kindertransports were, first and foremost, a humanitarian relief effort orchestrated by the Refugee Children's Movement (RCM) and hardworking individuals in collaboration with the British government in the late 1930s. Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain and the government decided to allow about 10,000 unaccompanied Jewish minors who were living under Nazi control into the United Kingdom without a visa. The transports left from train stations all over Germany, Austria, parts of Czechoslovakia, and parts of Poland and traveled to the Hook of Holland, where the passengers then boarded a boat to Harwich.[1] As the situation worsened in the Third Reich, transports began to arrive in Britain every four days.[2] The transports continued until Germany invaded Poland and war was officially declared on September 1, 1939.

The transports were a difficult and traumatic experience for the Kinder[3]; boarding the transports was a grim affair because the Nazis insisted that they happened under the cover of darkness to prevent any public sympathy towards the Jews.[4] Many of the Kinder were too young to understand what was happening, and some did not realize that their families were not coming with them until they were put on the train alone.[5] Their suitcases were often searched by the soldiers accompanying the transports, and if valuables were found, there was a possibility of being kicked off of the transport.

Even after their entry into the UK, the children's lives remained difficult. Several Kinder lived in more than one place in the few years after they arrived on the transports, and most of the

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[1] Turner, Barry. *And the Policeman Smiled*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing PLC, 1990, 35.
[2] *Central British Fund for World Jewish Relief/Refugee Children's Movement Documents*. Wiener Library, London: microfilm, accessed May 2017, 153/9.
[3] The terms Kind (singular) and Kinder (plural) refer to the children who travelled on the transports and will be used throughout this paper. These terms are used by the children who were rescued on the transports and are therefore generally accepted.
[4] Hodge, Deborah. *Rescuing the Children: The Story of the Kindertransport*. Toronto: Tundra Books, 2012, 23.
[5] Göpfert, Rebekka. "Kindertransport: History and Memory," *Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies* 23, no.1 (2004): 21.

children in the UK who lived in or near the cities, including Kinder, had to be evacuated to the countryside due to the war and bombings. The Refugee Children's Movement, the organization developed to care for the Kinder, tried to place Kinder in good homes but lacked the funds necessary to check in on every child. The Kinder were also plagued by problems, from homesickness and loneliness to trouble convincing the British government to let them go to school. Although their lives were difficult, they had escaped the Third Reich and the terrible fate that had most likely awaited them through the kindness and dedication of the British government and aid organizations in Britain and Germany. The Kinder never forgot this fact, and all personal interviews that I have read expressed gratitude that they were saved.

I will be addressing multiple questions in this paper, including how the Kinder were treated before, during, and after the transports; the psychological affects of the Kindertransports and the subsequent personal and familial issues; and how the Kindertransports has become codified in national and personal memory. I will also be including an overview of the RCM and its role in the transports. I am addressing the question of women's role in the transports because women are traditionally ignored or not focused on in narratives of war, and as a feminist and a Women's, Gender, Sexuality Studies minor I want to emphasize one of the projects run by women. The Kindertransports relied heavily on women because they dealt with children; women are usually called upon to care for children, whether or not they are related.

I am interested in the Kindertransports because I have been fascinated with World War II for upwards of ten years, and that passion has translated into dedicating my life to historical study. Although much has been written about the Kindertransports, I had not heard of it before starting this project, and I have broad background knowledge in the humanitarian issues of WWII. This topic is not commonly taught in primary and secondary schools, although it is

discussed in introductory Holocaust history courses at some universities, such as the Ohio State University.

Although World War II seems far away to young people today, it only ended 72 years ago. Many of the Kinder are still alive, and the reader should care about the Kindertransports because they deal with children who were torn from their families and suffered for the sake of survival. Although there has been recent scholarship on the subject, many of the Kinder were not encouraged to discuss their experiences for many years after the war. Also, discussing their stories and the problems of the transports may inspire conversation about the current pervasive negative attitudes towards refugees, including children, who are trying to escape similarly desperate situations. Furthermore, the transports were a huge humanitarian effort that was organized by passionate people to save children from the worst fates imaginable, and it is an important and controversial piece of Jewish history. The controversy stems from the RCM's decision to house the Kinder in non-Jewish foster homes, which instigated multiple forced or willing conversions to Christianity and a loss of their Jewish heritage. Hopefully this paper will shed light on how the transports operated and their myriad of effects on a nation and two generations.

By the generosity of the OSU Honors Program and other donors, I was able to go to the Wiener Library in London to access the Association of Jewish Refugees: Refugee Voices, an audio-visual Holocaust testimony archive that was commissioned in 2003.[6] The archive was created to preserve survivors' testimonies for future generations with the mindset that we have access to fewer survivors every day. The collection consists of 150 interviews of survivors that were also refugees and 450 hours of fully transcribed video recording; 30 were interviews with

[6] "Refugee Voices." Association of Jewish Refugees. 2009. Accessed November 17, 2017. http://www.ajr.org.uk/refugeevoices.

former Kinder about their experiences before, during, and after the transports. This was a valuable resource because it allowed me to read first-person testimonies that were at times deeply personal and therefore allowed me to glimpse into the psychology of the Kinder. Although their experiences happened many years prior to the interviews, the interviewees seemed to try to represent the truth as they remembered it. They appeared to be honest and open about their experiences, and although they expressed gratitude, they also discussed the problems that arose from the transports. At the Wiener Library, I also viewed microfilm of the Central British Fund for World Jewish Relief: Refugee Children's Movement documents, a primary source that allowed me to understand the inner workings and ideology of the organization. This information can help me understand why the Kinder were treated certain ways and why that treatment could have a negative impact in the long-term. I have many secondary sources about the Kindertransports, with topics ranging from the RCM and the people involved in the organization, to how the transports actually happened, to the psychological issues experienced by several of the Kinder. These sources help me understand and expand on many of the themes that surfaced in the Refugee Voices interviews. I will also be using the play by Diane Samuels, *Kindertransport*, to illustrate the difficulties that the Kinder experienced in keeping and maintaining familial relationships and dealing with their trauma. This resource is particularly helpful because Samuels interviewed multiple Kinder and created a conglomerate character and storyline that illuminates the experiences and struggles faced on the transports. However, this resource is historical fiction and can only be used as such.

While reading the transcripts of the Refugee Voices interviews, I looked for common themes among the children's experiences, as well as basic information about them and their story, such as country of origin, age at time of transport, gender, date of transport, if they

traveled alone or with someone else, sponsorship, route of transport, housing in England, country of final settlement, and their families' fates. I looked at these factors in order to find similarities and differences among the Kinder and to attempt to gain a well-rounded understanding of their experiences. I decided to read the transcripts of the interviews rather than listen to them because of time constraints; however, if a phrase or tone was confusing I watched the corresponding section of the interview to better understand the transcript. The way I am working with the play by Diane Samuels is similar; I read the play and watched it on YouTube rather than see it performed live, which was not possible due to the time constraints of this study.

After reading and comparing the Refugee Voices interviews, I then applied the information gathered from secondary sources to better understand the history, function, machinery, psychological effects, and consequences of the transports. I am using multiple secondary books and essays concerning the psychological effects and attitudes of the Kinder that acknowledge not only the patterns among them, but also the differences or outliers. For example, although the majority of the Kinder find fault in how Britain organized the transports and the years thereafter, some of the Kinder have only praise for the British government and their foster families. A few of these sources also examine the effects of the children's trauma on their children, otherwise known as second-generation trauma. Although mental health is a focus of the medical community today, many Kinder did not receive adequate care in the years after the transports. This lack of mental health care may have caused mental and emotional problems for the Kinder later in life, and may have caused them to pass their trauma on to their children. I use the book *And the Policeman Smiled* by Barry Turner as a main source in this study. This book is an overview of the transports and the experiences of the Kinder during the war. The author uses

Kinder interviews and the RCM's records as his main sources for the study. I found this book particularily useful because of the detailed descriptions coupled with the expansive list of topics.

Chapter One, entitled *Bureaucracy*, will deal with the bureaucratic processes involved in developing and executing the Kindertransports. I will be examining how and why Britain started the transports, the role of the CBFJR and the RCM, how the transports were funded, and how they were accomplished. One of the important roles of the RCM was finding foster families for Kinder, so I will discuss how they found those families and the criteria the families had to meet in order to foster a child. In this chapter, I will also give brief biographies of four important women in the RCM and the movement in general: Anna Essinger, Eleanor Rathbone, Bertha Bracey, and Geertruida (Truus) Wijsmuller-Meijer. The biographies will include their roles in creating the transports and how they championed the refugee children's rights. The chapter will end with a brief overview of how the transports operated.

Chapter Two, entitled *The Kinder and the Transports*, will deal with the treatment the Kinder experienced in various stages of their journey. Before they were selected to go on a transport, many of the Kinder experienced the demeaning and dangerous policies and tactics of the Third Reich. Many were forced out of their primary schools, ignored or mistreated by former friends, and limited in where they could go and what they could do in their towns. On the transports, there was fear of the German soldiers contrasted with the kindness of the Dutch women, which was commented on by nearly every Kinder who travelled through Holland. Once they arrived in the United Kingdom, some Kinder were subjected to a market-like selection process during which foster families picked out the best looking children and left the rest in the hands of the RCM. I will also discuss the refugee children's experiences during the war years with a strong focus on internment. Personal testimonies of Kinder relating to the topic of

internment will be used to illuminate the mistreatment and discrimination they faced at the hands of the British government and a xenophobic population.

Chapter Three, entitled *The Wake of the War and Developments Through Time*, will address the psychological effects of the transports, the effects of the transports on religion, and how the Kindertransports are codified in personal and national memory. All of the Kinder experienced some sort of psychological trauma before, during, and/or after the transports. This chapter will examine the psychological effects of the Kindertransports by discussing the traumatic events, different types of reactions of the Kinder, and the assistance offered by the RCM and other organizations. Jacob Newman states that developing children have three main needs in order to be mentally healthy: affection and love, security, and identification.[7] This paper will assess the ability of the Kinder to have those needs filled and how the lack of those three things caused problems. Multiple parts of the transports caused trauma, including leaving their parents as children or teenagers, bouncing around to different foster homes, evacuation in Britain, and internment of older Kinder once the war started. For many Kinder, these traumatic events were accompanied by an intense fear of abandonment.[8]. As the Kinder experienced a sharp shift in cultures via the transports, this affected their cultural and religious habits and traditions. Many of the Kinder who lived with Christian foster parents experienced at least one of the following attacks on their Judaism: forced conversions, lack of access to other Jews and Jewish institutions, and the inability to keep Kosher. This chapter will also discuss the RCM's response to these problems and its ultimate failure to preserve the children's Judaism. The children's cultures were also attacked because they were forced to learn English quickly, which

[7] Newman, Jacob. *Kinder transporte: a study of stresses and traumas of refugee children*. London: J. Newman, 1992, 80-84.
[8] Kestenberg, Judith S., and Charlotte Kahn. *Children Surviving Persecution: An International Study of Trauma and Healing*. Connecticut: Praeger, 1998, 63.

resulted in many forgetting how to speak their native language, and they were encouraged to try and hide their accents because it was dangerous to have an accent during the war. The Kinder had limited correspondence with their family who remained in their home country, and any correspondence typically ended at the start of the war. Whole families were lost, as well as family traditions that the Kinder could not preserve in their foster homes.

The chapter will also deal with how the Kindertransports are remembered. I will discuss literature and artwork produced by the Kinder as well as books, documentaries, and plays about the transports made by non-Kinder. Memorials in London will be examined in order to understand national British memory, which usually displays the transports as without faults or problems. I will use the play by Diane Samuels and the Refugee Voices interviews to illustrate how the Kinder felt towards their previous families and countries and their current families and countries as they grew older. I will discuss why many of the Kinder refused or neglected to tell their children what happened unless directly asked, and why some Kinder married camp survivors and kept quiet because they felt that their story was not as important as their spouse's.

As I conclude the study, I will reiterate how the Kindertransports were not wholly positive. Although the Kindertransports saved about 10,000 Jewish children from an almost certain death, it was not without conflicts. The transports cannot just be viewed as a heroic and nationalist point of British pride because that erases the traumatic experiences that most of the Kinder faced. Their voices and stories were stifled for decades because they were expected to be grateful and uncritical of Britain, but this silencing resulted in the ignorance of the second generation Kinder concerning their families' histories, increasing inherited trauma and strained family relations. Critical assessments of the program have only emerged more recently in part

because the transports were not always viewed as part of the overarching calamity of the Holocaust.

I will also summarize the influence of gender on the Kindertransports. Boy and girl Kinder experienced the transports differently, and more boys were selected to leave on the transports because of their unstable place in society. It was more common to keep the girl at home to help with the house while the boy was sent on what he sometimes saw as an adventure. Also, women played a crucial role in the foundation, organization, execution, and success of the transports.

Chapter 1: Bureaucracy

The Refugee Children's Movement and the Organizational Aspects of the Kindertransports

Introduction

Before discussing the actual transports and the experiences of the Kinder, it is important to discuss the organizations and bureaucracy involved in starting and maintaining the Kindertransports. Many dedicated people, including many women, worked tirelessly to make the transports a success and to navigate the British bureaucracy to save as many children as possible in a short amount of time. The history of influential refugee organizations in Britain set a precedent for the development of the Refugee Children's Movement, which brought together the leaders from multiple groups and the different sources of funding that were necessary to achieve a project as large as the Kindertransports. This chapter will examine why Britain opened its borders, the history of refugee aid organizations in Britain, organizational requirements, issues, and solutions, foster families, influential women of the movement, and a brief overview of the logistic aspects of the transports.

Why Britain? Where Refugees Were Allowed to Go

The Kindertransports were, first and foremost, a humanitarian relief effort orchestrated by British Jewish leaders and organizations in collaboration with the British government. The leaders of the Jewish community appealed directly to Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain a few days after Kristallnacht[9] to allow about 10,000 unaccompanied Jewish minors who were living under Nazi control into the United Kingdom without a visa.[10] Visas for any country were difficult to obtain in the late 1930's, especially for Jews who were constantly being stripped of

[9] State led violence against Jewish business and homes culminating in the arrest and long-term imprisonment of thousands of Jewish men, November 9-10, 1938.
[10] "Great Britain & the Holocaust." The Kindertransport. Accessed November 09, 2017. http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/the-kindertransport.

their livelihood in the Reich and therefore could not afford them, but children were not viewed as an imminent threat and therefore could be allowed in with much less official paperwork. According to Judith Tydor Baumel-Schwartz, "child refugees were preferred over adults for a number of emotional, psychological, and practical reasons: children evoked a humanitarian response faster than did adults; they would not enter the already problematic job market during the economic depression; they were considered more malleable than adult refugees; and they could be taught local language and customs and could ultimately learn to fit into their new society."[11] Adults were also viewed as a threat because Britain thought they might continue to be loyal to their home country and possibly act as spies or informants. However, young children were not traditionally used for espionage and did not have as many years to form national loyalty. For these reasons, Britain decided to allow children in with very few stipulations.

Britain also decided to open its borders to these children, known as the Kinder, because few other countries would or could help. The United States was still climbing out of the Great Depression, and isolationism prevailed in policy.[12] A conference was held on 6 July 1938 at Evian, France to address the refugee crisis after the Anschluß. The Americans were expected to set the precedent for the other countries in attendance, and they only pledged to fill existing quotes by making the bureaucracy easier to navigate.[13] Unfortunately, this led other countries to take a path of inaction towards refugees. The Netherlands implemented a very liberal refugee policy that involved resettlement; therefore, they were vocally pro-refugee in the worldwide conversation about the so-called refugee crisis.[14] There were Kindertransports to other countries, such as Denmark and the Netherlands as well but those children eventually fell back under Nazi

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[11] Baumel-Schwartz, Judith Tydor. *Never Look Back: The Jewish Refugee Children in Great Britain, 1938–1945*. West Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue University Press, 2012, 51-52.
[12] Turner, *And the Policeman Smiled*, 5.
[13] Baumel-Schwartz, *Never Look Back*, 42-43.
[14] Turner, *And the Policeman Smiled*, 6.

control and most likely perished. However, some children survived in hiding in the Reich and across Nazi-occupied Europe. The British Kindertransports were the only ones that successfully kept the children safe throughout the entire course of the war. The British also felt that the world would look to them as a humanitarian role model if the transports succeeded.[15]

In national British memory the Kindertransports are viewed as an unproblematic and great achievement that illustrates their important role in World War II. However, the transports took place during Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain's policy of appeasement and policies against other Jewish refugees.[16] Britain severely limited the number of Jewish refugees allowed to immigrate to Palestine and did little to encourage their allies and other countries to open their borders to refugees.[17] Chamberlain was constantly pushing for peace with Germany and met with Hitler multiple times. He allowed Hitler to invade the Sudetenland without any consequences.[18] The British did not want to have a completely open refugee policy because they were worried that this would encourage Germany to persecute and expel even more Jews.[19] They also did not want Jewish adults to immigrate to Britain and take British jobs and settle there permanently. The children were expected to go back to their country of origin or to move on from Britain after their safety was secured, although many Kinder did live in the UK for the rest of their lives. Also, the Kindertransports were not a perfect operation. They suffered from lack of funding and manpower, time constraints, language barriers, xenophobia, and fear mongering.

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[15] Göpfert, "Kindertransport: History and Memory," 21-22.
[16] Grenville, Anthony. "The Kindertransports: An Introduction," *Yearbook of the Research Centre for German and Austrian Exile Studies: Kindertransport to Britain 1938/39: New Perspectives* 13 (2012): 1-2.
[17] Hammel, Andrea. "Child Refugees Forever?: The History of the Kindertransport to Britain 1938/39." *Diskurs Kindheits- und Jugendforschung Heft* 2 (2010): 136.
[18] The National Archives, Extracts from the Minute of the conversation between Neville Chamberlain and Adolf Hitler at Berchtesgaden (FO 371/21738), http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/resources/chamberlain-and-hitler/source-2a/.
[19] Göpfert, "Kindertransport: History and Memory," 22.

History of Refugee Aid Organizations in Britain

In the late 1800s and early 1900s, Eastern European Jews were immigrating to Britain, which caused tension because the British Jewish community viewed them as uncultured and did not want their behavior to reflect poorly on the British community.[20] The Aliens Restriction Act in 1905 vastly decreased the number of Eastern European Jewish immigrants, and the start of World War I in 1914 caused an almost complete halt to all immigration. There was little immigration in the 1920s, and the Jews in Britain assimilated. At this time Jewish communal life was well organized and the leadership was centralized, and Jewish education reflected the divisions in the community between Orthodox, Reform, and Liberal sects.[21]

Before Kristallnacht, the main organizations working with Jewish refugee children were the Children's Inter-Aid Committee and B'nai Brith.[22] The Jewish Refugees Committee was another group made up of leaders from different refugee organizations and was formed in 1933 to address the issues that accompanied the large influx of refugees from Germany.[23] The Emigration Committee branch of this organization helped develop the framework that made Kindertransports successful. However, these organizations needed more funding and manpower and different organizational machinery in order to carry out the Kindertransports, which was the largest refugee program yet attempted. After Britain approved the Kindertransport scheme in 1938, multiple refugee organizations, leaders, and sources of funding combined to form the Movement for the Care of Children from Germany in November 1938. The Refugee Children's Movement (RCM) developed out of the Movement for the Care of Children from Germany.[24] The Central British Fund for World Jewish Relief was formed as the fundraising body for the

[20] Baumel-Schwartz, *Never Look Back*, 25.
[21] Baumel-Schwartz, *Never Look Back*, 26.
[22] Baumel-Schwartz, *Never Look Back*, 74-75.
[23] Baumel-Schwartz, *Never Look Back*, 35.
[24] Baumel-Schwartz, *Never Look Back*, 74-75.

RCM, which was crucial because the organization lacked the finances necessary to fund the Kindertransports.

Organizational Requirements, Problems, and Solutions

The Refugee Children's Movement's fundraising branch, the Central British Fund for World Jewish Relief, was struggling to find sufficient funds and foster families willing to care for the Kinder. The transports were difficult to finance because the entire organization operated on donated funds through 1939.[25] By October 1941, the RCM could no longer cover all expenses with donated funds, so the Home Office took over the cost of the care of children living with foster families and the Unemployment Assistance Board helped young workers whose wages did not cover all living expenses.[26] This government grant-in-aid also covered 75% of the cost of administration of the RCM. Every Kind was insured by the RCM against seventy two illnesses and mishaps up to £10, as not everyone was living with a foster family, and not every foster family could afford their medical care.[27] The RCM made it clear to the foster families that they would not receive any money from the organization or the government, even though a good portion of the foster families were lower middle class, working class, or lived on farms.[28] These lower-class families stepped up in part because they wanted more children to work on the farm or in the home.[29] The organization tried to augment its status as a non-denominational organization to garner widespread support and much needed funds, but this caused conflict with the orthodox Jews who lived in Britain and were involved with the organization.[30] These Jews did not want Jewish Kinder to be settled with Christian families because they were afraid that

[25] Göpfert, "Kindertransport: History and Memory," 24.
[26] CBFWJR/RCM Documents, "Third Annual Report 1941," 153/40-41.
[27] CBFWJR/RCM Documents, "First Annual Report 1939," 153/14.
[28] CBFWJR/RCM Documents, "Instructions for the Guidance of Regional and Local Committees," 155/10.
[29] Clementi, *Holocaust Mothers and Daughters*, 159.
[30] Turner, *And the Policeman Smiled*, 72 and 76.

they would be converted. Some in the orthodox Jewish community believed that the preservation of the children's Jewishness was more important than being placed in a potentially loving and supportive Christian foster home.[31] According to the RCM, the model foster parents were Jewish, led well-established, upper-middle-class lives away from urban centers, spoke at least a little German, and could tolerate moody and frequently traumatized children.[32] Of course, this very specific type of family was hard to come by, and many Kinder ended up in poor Christian households. These households sometimes found the Kinder difficult to deal with due to the language barrier and the misunderstanding of bad behavior as deviant.[33] Rather than deviance, these behaviors stemmed from loneliness, homesickness, and trauma. Also, Jews in Britain constituted less than one percent of the population and a small percentage of those homes opened their doors to the Kinder, so it was difficult for all Kinder to be placed in Jewish homes.[34] The RCM tried to recruit potential foster parents and raise awareness of the transports by publishing pictures of Kinder in local newspapers to personalize their struggle. Once foster families were recruited, vetted, and approved, they were at first allowed to choose the children they wanted in a demeaning market-like situation.[35] This method was abandoned as less attractive or older children were repeatedly left behind, which negatively impacted their behavior.

The RCM recognized that non-Jewish foster families could present many difficulties for Jewish Kinder, especially Orthodox Jewish Kinder. There were instances of forced conversion and foster parents preventing Orthodox Kinder from keeping kosher, either as a matter of convenience or as a misunderstanding of their religion. However, the RCM also recognized that it was important for Kinder to be placed in homes with families to encourage assimilation into

[31] Baumel-Schwartz, *Never Look Back*, 120.
[32] Turner, *And the Policeman Smiled*, 107.
[33] CBFWJR/RCM Documents, "Instructions for the Guidance of Regional and Local Committees," 155/17.
[34] Turner, *And the Policeman Smiled*, 108.
[35] Göpfert, "Kindertransports: History and Memory," 23.

British society and childhood development and that there were not enough Jewish homes offered to accommodate foster children. Therefore, the RCM organized the Religious Teaching Sub-Committee to address these problems surrounding the children's Judaism.[36] This committee included Reverend W. W. Simpson, the Honorable Lily Montagu, and Rabbi Solomon Schönfeld, who himself had organized transports to rescue orthodox children. Rabbi Schönfeld ended up leaving the committee because he felt that the RCM was not sufficiently prioritizing the religion of the Kinder and not moving fast enough to save Kinder from conversion and baptism. Rabbi Schönfeld was so focused on the importance of religion that he rescued religious leaders and their families from the Reich before organizing Kindertransports.[37] The committee dealt with problems on a case-by-case basis, which meant that their reactions were slow and discouraged overarching programs or solutions.[38] This delay in action caused Jewish Kinder to stay in Christian foster homes for months, which in turn caused higher rates of conversion to Christianity and baptism.[39] There were at least 250 Jewish Kinder who reported that they were not receiving any religious training and even more facing hostile anti-Jewish environments or incomplete Jewish education.[40] This number may be a fraction of a larger sample because the RCM did not have the resources to ask every Kinder how their religious studies were progressing at their foster homes and hostels. At this time, antisemitism did not exist only in Germany; many countries had long histories of antisemitism.

Another problem the committee faced was that the types of Judaism in Germany did not exactly correlate to the types practiced in England, so many Jewish Kinder felt out of place even

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[36] CBFWJR/RCM Documents, "Refugee Children's Movement Ltd: Religious Teaching," 161/7-10.
[37] Kranzler, David. *Holocaust Hero: The Untold Story and Vignettes of Solomon Schonfeld, an Extraordinary British Orthodox Rabbi Who Rescued 4000 Jews During the Holocaust*. Jersey City, NJ: KTAV Publishers, 2004, 54.
[38] CBFWJR/RCM Documents, "Refugee Children's Movement Ltd: Religious Teaching," 161/11.
[39] Baumel-Schwartz, *Never Look Back*, 120.
[40] CBFWJR/RCM Documents, "Refugee Children's Movement Ltd: Religious Teaching," 161/16.

when interacting with the English Jewish community.[41] The RCM also formed the Joint Emergency Committee to investigate the Jewish education of the Kinder as required.[42] When the Kinder were evacuated along with British children out of urban areas due to fear of bombing, they typically ended up in communities that had little exposure to Judaism. There were no synagogues or Jewish communities nearby, and it was nearly impossible for Orthodox Kinder to keep kosher. Lack of knowledge and understanding caused many problems, including forced or willing conversions and baptisms.

Foster Families

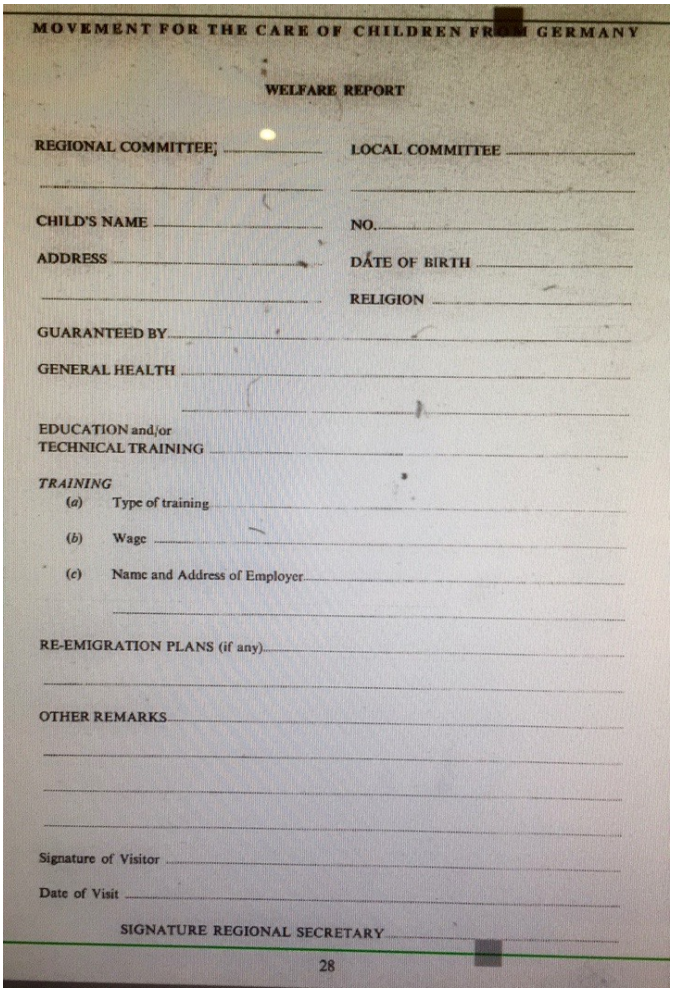
As so many foster families were needed, the RCM advertised in newspapers for foster families, and the BBC put out a radio broadcast asking for the public's help in harboring the Kinder.[43] Although the RCM supposedly investigated every potential foster home, about 50% of Kinder had to be removed from their foster families "as a result of incompatibility."[44] Many foster families were ill prepared to deal with stressed and traumatized children who, in most cases, did not speak any English. Also, no financial assistance was given to foster families, so some could not handle the financial strain.[45] The RCM also acknowledged that "signs of instability of character" in the children were most likely due to "deep-seated nervous disturbance" and should not be ignored or criticized, but rather discussed and treated.[46] They also pointed out that the uncertainty of the children's families' fates, and the children's inability to contact parents during the war caused anxiety in many of the children. The RCM directed foster parents towards organizations that could help solve the children's problems. The large number of

[41] CBFWJR/RCM Documents, "Refugee Children's Movement Ltd: Religious Teaching," 161/21.
[42] CBFWJR/RCM Documents, "Refugee Children's Movement Ltd: Religious Teaching," 161/25.
[43] Hodge, *Rescuing the Children*, 29.
[44] CBFWJR/RCM Documents, "First Annual Report 1939," 153/14.
[45] CBFWJR/RCM Documents, "Instructions for the Guidance of Regional and Local Committees," 155/11.
[46] CBFWJR/RCM Documents, "Instructions for the Guidance of Regional and Local Committees," 155/17.

children and the wide range of locations in which they were housed prevented the RCM from checking up on each Kinder the appropriate number of times. This caused some housing problems or conflicts to go unnoticed, which may have caused mental problems for Kinder in the long run. The RCM claimed that "practically every child is well and is being looked after just as carefully as the average English child," which was just not the case.[47]

After the RCM recruited foster families, it vetted them with home visits and a series of questions. These questions covered topics such as religion, marital status, employment, household help, sleeping arrangements, education, and what type of child the family would like to foster. The interviewer was encouraged to observe the character and temperament of the interviewee, the type and size of the house, and the overall quality of the environment.[48] The RCM visited the foster homes after the child was placed in order to verify that the child was being treated appropriately and to mediate between the child, distrustful of people because of their traumatic experiences, and the foster parents, who saw this attitude as ungrateful or problematic.[49]

[47] CBFWJR/RCM Documents, "First Annual Report 1939," 153/15.
[48] CBFWJR/RCM Documents, "Instructions for the Guidance of Regional and Local Committees," 155/10-11.
[49] CBFWJR/RCM Documents, "Instructions for the Guidance of Regional and Local Committees," 155/16.



MOVEMENT FOR THE CARE OF CHILDREN FR[redacted] GERMANY

WELFARE REPORT

REGIONAL COMMITTEE _____ LOCAL COMMITTEE _____

_____ _____

CHILD'S NAME _____ NO. _____

ADDRESS _____ DATE OF BIRTH _____

_____ RELIGION _____

GUARANTEED BY _____

GENERAL HEALTH _____

_____ _____

EDUCATION and/or
TECHNICAL TRAINING _____

TRAINING

(*a*) Type of training _____

(*b*) Wage _____

(*c*) Name and Address of Employer _____

_____

RE-EMIGRATION PLANS (if any) _____

_____

OTHER REMARKS _____

_____

_____

_____

Signature of Visitor _____

Date of Visit _____

SIGNATURE REGIONAL SECRETARY _____

28

1. Blank Welfare Report Form the RCM used to evaluate status of Kinder once they were settled in Britain (from the CBFWJR/RCM Documents accessed at the Wiener Library)

Women in the RCM

The RCM and the Kindertransports were focused on children and therefore utilized many women in leadership and organizational roles. It is typical for society to rely on women to care for children, even when they are not their own.[50] Women were in charge of about eight out of twelve Regional Committees of the RCM, and Quaker women were heavily involved in their Regional Committees as well.[51] Dorothy Hardisty took over the role of executive director at the start of the war when Sir Charles Stead suddenly resigned, and she successfully led the RCM throughout the war.[52] She was previously the secretary of the RCM and had many years of experience in the Department of Labor specializing in youth employment; those skills were helpful while working with the Kindertransports. She frequently had to deal with the critics of the RCM and the aftermath of the transports, especially the pushback against placing Jewish children in non-Jewish homes.

One of the women crucial to the success of the transports was Eleanor Rathbone, the Independent MP for the Combined Universities, who fought in parliament for the project's success.[53] She also founded the Parliamentary Committee for Refugees, protested against the categorization of Kinder as enemy aliens during the war, and combatted antisemitic propaganda. Another important woman was Bertha Bracey, a Quaker and the Secretary of the Friends' German Emergency Committee.[54] She handled 14,000 case records of refugees that came to Britain before the Kindertransports and helped lobby the Home Office to approve the Kindertransports. After the war started and refugees aged sixteen and older began to be interned,

[50] Clementi, *Holocaust Mothers and Daughters*, 170.
[51] Oldfield, Sybil. "'It Is Usually She': The Role of British Women in the Rescue and Care of the Kindertransport Kinder," *Shofar* 23, no. 1 (2004): 57.
[52] Baumel-Schwartz, *Never Look Back*, 75-76.
[53] Oldfield, "'It Is Usually She,'" 57, 58-59.
[54] Oldfield, "'It is Usually She,'" 59-60.

she visited the women's camp on the Isle of Man. The Quakers as a community were very involved in humanitarian efforts, including but not limited to the Kindertransports.

Anna Essinger was a progressive teacher and administrator at Bunce Court School in Germany who saw the danger mounting and feared for the safety of her students and staff.[55] She managed to move her entire school, including all colleagues and pupils, from Danube, Germany to Kent in 1933 and then turned the school into a hostel for Kinder in 1938. She accepted refugee children regardless of their ability to pay. The children were taught most subjects, including practical skills like gardening and cleaning because practical work was valued equally to academic work. Essinger was one of the few who encouraged the children to retain their knowledge of the German language and their cultural background while also teaching them English. She was highly influential in the RCM and repeatedly rescued Kinder from negative or unsatisfactory foster homes.[56] 305 boys and 220 girls, most of them refugees, passed through Bunce Court from 1933-1943.[57] One Kind named Leslie Brent remembers Bunce Court as a secure place that allowed him to develop normally.[58] Bunce Court faced problems when the war started. All males over the age of sixteen were interned and the estate was commandeered for military use.[59]

Another woman who was essential to the movement was Geertruida (Truus) Wijsmuller-Meijer, an active resistance member dedicated to saving children in Germany and Austria.[60] In December 1938, she met with the important Nazi leader Adolph Eichmann, who was in charge of all deportations and later organized the so-called Final Solution. She managed to convince

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[55] CBFWJR/RCM Documents, "Bunce Court School 1933-1943," 154/11-15.
[56] Oldfield, "'It is Usually She,'" 61-62.
[57] CBFWJR/RCM Documents, "Bunce Court School 1933-1943," 154/16.
[58] AJR Refugee Voices, Leslie Brent Interview, 19.
[59] CBFWJR/RCM Documents, "Bunce Court School 1933-1943," 154/9.
[60] "The Righteous Among The Nations: Wijsmuller Family." Yad Vashem. Accessed September 2, 2017. http://db.yadvashem.org/righteous/family.html?language=en&itemId=4018228.

him to let her organize transports of children from Austria to England, but he stipulated that they had to leave within the next five days. She may have been able to convince him to let Jewish children leave Austria because Eichmann's goal was to transport all Jews out of the country; she just made his job easier. Wijsmuller-Meijer worked with the local Jewish organizations to quickly organize a transport of 600 children; Eichmann kept his word and allowed them to leave. She continued to organize transports and save hundreds of children from suffering at the hands of the Nazis, as well as participate in other resistance activities throughout the war. These women were crucial to the success of the Kindertransports, and the 10,000 children would not have been saved without their hard work and dedication.

The Transports

In Germany, the Jewish communities and the Council of German Jews established a department for child emigration in 1933.[61] This department received all interested families' applications concerning their children for emigration and made their selections, which they then sent to London. The RCM chose children from those applications who seemed suitable for emigration and contacted the department in Germany to organize the transports. The RCM relied on the Jewish communities in Germany to decide which of the 60,000 children who applied were to come to Britain, unless someone who lived there, possibly a friend or relative, had already guaranteed them.[62] Urgent reasons to be included were the danger of incarceration, death of parents, and absence of any means of livelihood.[63] Also, boys over the age of fourteen were given priority because they were viewed as a threat by the Nazi regime; however, very few families wanted to foster them, so they mostly worked as laborers or lived in hostels.[64] Children

[61] Hammel, "Child Refugees Forever?" 134.
[62] CBFWJR/RCM Documents, "First Annual Report 1939," 153/5.
[63] CBFWJR/RCM Documents, "First Annual Report 1939," 153/6.
[64] CBFWJR/RCM Documents, "First Annual Report 1939," 153/7.

over the age of twelve needed to have a £50 deposit supplied by the RCM to fund their supposed eventual remigration out of Britain.[65] 79 percent of the Kinder were Jewish, with 45 percent Liberal, 20 percent Orthodox, and 14 percent non-practicing.[66] It is unclear if the 79 percent were designation as Jewish by the German government or the British government. The majority of Jewish Kinder were Liberal, which means they practiced some aspects of Judaism but were not Orthodox, or non-practicing because many Jews across Europe were assimilated. Over half of the Kinder came from Germany, and many came from middle class backgrounds.[67]

The leaders of the Jewish communities in the Reich and the RCM worked together to find adults, usually young Jewish or Quaker men and women, willing to accompany the transports as chaperones.[68] However, these adults had to return to their country of origin; adults could not use the transports as means of escape or else they ran the risk of the entire operation being cancelled. These adults were brave and selfless; some even suspended their own emigration in order to help as many children as possible escape.

[65] CBFWJR/RCM Documents, "First Annual Report 1939," 153/7.
[66] Baumel-Schwartz, *Never Look Back*, 130.
[67] "Kindertransport Survey." AJR: Kindertransport Survey. 2009. Accessed November 17, 2017. http://www.ajr.org.uk/kindersurvey
[68] Hodge, *Rescuing the Children*, 26.

Chapter 2: The Kinder and the Transports

The Experiences of Kinder Before, During, and After the Transports

Introduction

The experiences of Kinder before, during, and after the transports are well documented through personal testimonies and surveys, and in this chapter I will examine those experiences to find similarities, differences, and common themes. These concepts will help broaden the understanding of the refugee children's experiences and lend themselves to the development of the next chapter, which deals with the psychological consequences of the transports. Kinder were treated much worse in Nazi Germany than in their new homes in Britain, but their experiences were not fully positive. Multiple Kinder were mistreated at the hands of their English foster families or hostel managers and were denied the future that they or their parents planned in Germany. During the war, many Kinder were also mistreated by the British government.

Before the Transports

Throughout the 1930s, the gathering Nazi pogrom began to affect all Jews in the Reich. The 1935 Reich Citizenship Law took citizenship and the protections associated with it away from "non-Aryans," and the Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honor prevented marriages between Aryans and Jews and a later addendum created clear rules outlining who was and was not an Aryan.[69] A person was defined as Jewish if they had three or four Jewish grandparents and were defined as a Mischlinge if they had one or two Jewish grandparents, regardless of the individual's actual religion. This racial categorization and the forced registration of Jews clearly illustrated to the community and the government who was the enemy and made them easy targets for violence and discrimination. Many Kinder interviewed in

[69] Bergen, Doris L. *War and Genocide: A Concise History of the Holocaust*. London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016, 91-92.

the AJR Refugee Voices Program remembered the phrase *Juden Verboten*, which means "Jews prohibited."[70] This phrase was plastered on stores, community centers, and movie theaters, and the Kinder remember the frustration and pain of being excluded from German public life. Many people who were children in the Nazi Reich recall being forced to learn racial theory, expelled from public schools, and beaten up by Hitler Youth or "Aryan" children.[71] They also remember quickly losing most if not all of their non-Jewish friends and relying on the Jewish community. Some of their fathers or older male relatives were arrested and sent to internment camps, and some of their families attempted to emigrate. These arrests and efforts to emigrate increased after the blatant violence of Kristallnacht. However, emigration was a difficult, expensive, and lengthy process, so parents began to turn to programs like the Kindertransports to at least save their children from whatever fate awaited the family. The Nazis both encouraged and encumbered emigration; they wanted to expel as many Jews as possible but they did not allow them to leave with any wealth, which decreased their desirability and their likelihood of obtaining a visa.[72]

The RCM relied on the Jewish communities in Germany to choose which children to send on the transports. This was a terribly difficult decision to make as all Jewish children living under the Reich were in danger; boys aged fourteen and older were typically included because they were seen as an immediate threat by the Nazi state. Occasionally, whole schools were transported, like in the case of Anna Essinger's Bunce Court School. It was common for only one child in a family to be sent away, and families sometimes chose to keep daughters or very young children at home. Some families chose to send their sons but not their daughters because they believed that the Reich would not physically harm women. It was more common for young

[70] Association of Jewish Refugees. *Refugee Voices*. Audio and transcripts of voice interviews.
[71] Bergen, *War and Genocide*, 93.
[72] Benz, Wolfgang, "Emigration as Rescue and Trauma: The Historical Context of the Kindertransport." Translated by Andrea Hammel. *Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies*. 23, no. 1 (2004): 3.

men to leave home to find work than it was for young women, and daughters typically took on caretaking responsibilities for elderly parents.[73] Lori Cahn recalls being pulled from the train by her father as it was leaving the station; he could not bear to part with his only daughter.[74] She survived Auschwitz, but neither of her parents did. Leslie Brent, a Kind from Köslin, Germany, recalls how his sister refused to go on a transport because she was in love and did not want to leave their parents.[75] However, some siblings were sent on the transports together, although there was no certainty that they would be able to live together in Britain. Children were more likely to be chosen to go on the transports if they had a family member or friend in Britain who guaranteed them and gave 50£ to the RCM.

During the Transports

After the children were chosen to go on the transports, the preparations began. The Kinder were permitted to take ten Reichsmarks and one suitcase with nothing overly valuable.[76] Of course, many families tried to smuggle money and family heirlooms out of Germany with their children on the transports both in order to fund their child's new life and to save valuable possessions from the frequent Nazi raids. However, the children's suitcases were often searched. If valuables were found, the German soldiers stole them for personal gain, and there was a possibility of being kicked off of the transport and forced to remain in the Reich.[77] For some families, this was a risk they were willing to take. One Kind recalls how her mother hid jewelry in her hollowed-out boot heels.[78]

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[73] Kaplan, Marion A. *Between Dignity and Despair: Jewish Life in Nazi Germany*. New York City: Oxford University Press, 1998, 140.
[74] Clementi, *Holocaust Mothers and Daughters*, 171.
[75] AJR Refugee Voices, Leslie Brent Interview, 3.
[76] Hodge, *Rescuing the Children: the Story of the Kindertransport*, 20.
[77] Baumel-Schwartz, *Never Look Back*, 106.
[78] Turner, *And the Policeman Smiled*, 43.

Mothers were frequently the parent who organized their children's departures, so these hidden and packed objects were often gendered.[79] The items were connected with the domestic sphere and functioned as memories and connections to home for the Kinder.[80] The familial objects sent with the children were also an attempt to maintain their cultural identity.[81] When times were difficult for Kinder in Britain, they could turn to these objects for comfort and to feel close to their families they left behind.[82] Also, many of their families lost most if not all of their possessions, so any wealth that traveled to England with the Kinder could have helped support them or start a new life after the war.

The start of the transports in the Reich were dismal for many of the children. Leaving family is never easy, but some of the children did not realize that they were leaving without their families until they were put on the train alone.[83] If they were older and understood the situation, most still thought that they would be reunited with their families shortly. The Kinder were not allowed to take many personal items to Britain, and they had few creature comforts on the journey.

On the transports, older Kinder were frequently charged with caring for the younger ones, which caused some friction and put them in a difficult position where they had to remain positive and calm despite their fear and anxiety. The German state never stopped menacing the transports, and they threatened to end them if the chaperones, some of whom were young Jewish adults who also wished for safety, did not return to Germany or Austria after delivering the children in England.[84] After the transports left their country of origin, they typically traveled to the Hook of

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[79] Clementi, *Holocaust Mothers and Daughters,* 170-177.
[80] Clementi, *Holocaust Mothers and Daughters*, 193.
[81] Clementi, *Holocaust Mothers and Daughters*, 181.
[82] Clementi, *Holocaust Mothers and Daughters*, 177.
[83] Göpfert, "Kindertransports: History and Memory," 21.
[84] Hodge, *Rescuing the Children*, 26.

Holland, where the passengers boarded a boat to Harwich.[85] In Holland, the transports were greeted by groups of Dutch women who gave the Kinder fruit, chocolate, and encouraging words. The kindness of the Dutch contrasted to the harsh treatment by the German soldiers was a common theme for many Kinder, who made a point of discussing the compassion and sympathy shown by the Dutch in their memoirs or interviews. After the boat portion of the trip, many Kinder passed through Liverpool Station in London on their way to new and safer, albeit difficult, lives.

Settlement After the Transports

When the Kinder arrived at Liverpool Station in London or other areas in the United Kingdom, they were scared and anxious. Leslie Brent, a Kind from Köslin, Germany, remembered the tense atmosphere on the train and the accompanying anxiety.[86] Eli Fachler, a Zionist Kind from Berlin, recalled a feeling of relief when the train crossed the border into Holland.[87] Most Kinder did not speak English, so it was hard for them to understand what was happening. Some of them had family members or other pre-arraigned guarantors waiting for them, while others underwent a type of marketplace where foster families had the opportunity to handpick their foster child. Other Kinder, including the ones not selected by foster families, were sent to hostels and boarding schools. For example, Stefan Udo Ruff was devastated that he was not chosen by a foster family and ended up living in six hostels during his childhood and young adulthood.[88] For many Kinder, uncertainty was a constant in their lives. It was common for Kinder to live in more than one place in the first few years after they arrived on the transports, and it was nearly impossible to continue any friendships made on the journey.

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[85] Turner, *And the Policeman Smiled, 35*.
[86] AJR Refugee Voices, Leslie Brent Interview, 16.
[87] AJR Refugee Voices, Eli Fachler Interview, 26.
[88] AJR Refugee Voices, Stefan Udo Ruff Interview, 19-25.

Kinder did not always find their foster families or hostels to be good fits. Foster families were not always equipped to successfully care for a traumatized child who spoke little English, and some Kinder were expected to work on farms or as servants for the new family. It was fairly common for Kinder to experience some degree of coldness in their foster homes, and this was likely the result of antisemitism and distant and severe child-rearing methods that were standard in Britain at the time.[89] Milena Roth, a Kind from Prague, describes her foster mother Doris Campbell as cold and unemotional; Roth was treated like a servant and was never asked about her personal life.[90] Britain was not a violently antisemitic country at this time; they subscribed to a subtle brand of antisemitism and thought that the Nazi brand of antisemitism was far too extreme.[91] Some foster families also attempted the mental suppression of the children's past lives to make them passive, respectful, and obedient rather than emotional and disobedient.[92] Sometimes foster homes could be both good and bad; both Fay Shaw and Alice Rubinstein recall being separately placed with Jewish families who were nice but treated them like maids.[93] Luckily, both of those placements were short lived. Gertrude Goldberg was one of the fortunate Kind who stayed in one foster home for the duration of her childhood in Britain and therefore experienced the stability necessary for a developing child. Her foster parents allowed her to continue her Jewish education, but she was made fun of at school and her family was not very affectionate or loving.[94]

Many Kinder came to Britain guaranteed by the RCM, not a foster family, and the RCM needed to find places for them to stay until they found foster families for them.[95] The first

[89] Clementi, *Holocaust Mothers and Daughters*, 163-15.
[90] Clementi, *Holocaust Mothers and Daughters*, 165-166.
[91] Clementi, *Holocaust Mothers and Daughters*, 166.
[92] Clementi, *Holocaust Mothers and Daughters*, 167.
[93] AJR Refugee Voices, Fay Shaw Interview, 19; Alice Rubinstein Interview, 15.
[94] AJR Refugee Voices, Gertrude Goldberg Interview, 13-17.
[95] Baumel-Schwartz, *Never Look Back*, 113.

solution the RCM found was to place the children in empty summer holiday camps like Dovercourt Bay Holiday Camp near Harwich and the Pakefield Holiday Camp near Lowstoft. Hundreds of Kinder stayed at these camps. After the Kinder arrived, the ones without foster families were temporarily sent to these camps. These holiday camps turned hostels were only equipped to operate in the summer and the Kinder suffered terribly cold winters.[96] These camps suffered from lack of funds as well, but many neighbors generously donated food and clothing.[97] All food in the camps was kosher so that all children could eat regardless of level of religious observance. Due to the conditions in the camp, children could not stay there for very long so the RCM organized the market-like situations where foster families selected Kinder to take home.[98] These camps closed in late December 1938 and early 1939, and the remaining children who had not been chosen by foster families were moved to other hostels.[99]

Hostels could be a daunting experience because children who were previously strangers had to live, work, and learn together. The hostels were filled by mostly older boys because they were the group least desired by foster families.[100] Hostels were usually established in or near cities, staffed by volunteers, and run on donations and support from the RCM. Hostels usually had some type of work aspect, such as gardening, farming, or building, and the children were taught these trades under the assumption that these and factory work were the only career options that were suitable for them. Bunce Court School and Hostel, discussed in Chapter One, showcases the format of successful hostels that attempted to prepare their young charges for blue-collar jobs. However, conditions varied drastically among hostels, even in the same area;

[96] AJR Refugee Voices, Stefan Udo Ruff Interview, 19.
[97] Baumel-Schwartz, *Never Look Back*, 114.
[98] Baumel-Schwartz, *Never Look Back*, 115.
[99] Baumel-Schwartz, *Never Look Back*, 117.
[100] Baumel-Schwartz, *Never Look Back*, 117.

the conditions depended on the types of donations received and the administration.[101] Some hostels were not as focused on the children's well-being and preparing them for the future, and abuse and poor or crowded living conditions were experienced at some hostels, such as Dovercourt and Pakefield camps. Also, some hostels were run by individuals with little to no experience dealing with children, and the children's mental and emotional needs were not always fully acknowledged.[102] Boys and girls usually went to different hostels or lived in separate quarters, but many worked and learned together, creating opportunities for relationships.

Most, if not all, of the Kinder had difficulty adjusting to their new situations. They struggled to reconcile their previous worldview and experiences with the new one being forced upon them. For example, although most Kinder wanted to continue school to fulfill their parents' wishes, some were prevented from doing so by their foster parents or even the British government. There was a lack of funding for higher education, and the RCM's funds in particular were very restricted.[103] However, many Kinder were determined to better themselves, and the AJR Kinder survey shows that they achieved above average rates of education.[104] This was usually achieved through monetary donations, hard work, and evening classes. The type of education the Kinder received was highly dependent on where they were living; some foster families valued education and helped Kinder go to university, but others pulled Kinder out of schools to work on the farm or in the house.[105] Many Kinder lost the ability to speak their native language as they tried to quickly learn English.[106]

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[101] Baumel-Schwartz, *Never Look Back*, 118.
[102] Baumel-Schwartz, *Never Look Back*, 118.
[103] Hammel, "Child Refugees Forever?" 140.
[104] Association of Jewish Refugees, "Kindertransport Survey," accessed November 2017, http://www.ajr.org.uk/kindersurvey.
[105] Hammel, "Child Refugees Forever?" 140.
[106] Association of Jewish Refugees. *Refugee Voices*. Audio and transcripts of voice interviews.

Kindertransportees' Experiences During the War Years

Most of the children in the United Kingdom who lived in or near the cities, including Kinder, had to be evacuated to the countryside during the war due to bombings. This secondary upheaval took some Kinder from semi-secure foster homes or hostels and dumped them into the countryside, where very few Jewish people lived. All families in evacuation areas who had one or more spare rooms had to take in children, and the RCM could not always control where the Kinder were placed during evacuation.[107] Many of the British people who lived in the countryside had never even met a Jewish person and had no idea how to deal with the dietary and religious restrictions that some Kinder needed. For example, Harvey Ottman, a Kind from Gladbeck, Germany who was on the very first transport, was originally placed in a Jewish foster home in a friendly Jewish community in Manchester, but then he was forced to evacuate to Blackpool, where he was placed with a family who was unfamiliar with Judaism.[108]

The evacuation was difficult for all children involved, but the Kinder were more deeply affected by the instability. The Kinder were constantly attempting to blend into their new environment to escape detection and possible persecution by non-Jews or xenophobic community members, and the move to the countryside made this even more difficult.[109] It was nearly impossible to blend in when there were no other Jewish people in the area, unless the Kinder gave up their Jewish identity. This constant flux of housing caused both short and long-term issues for the Kinder.

Once the threat of a German invasion became a reality in the early 1940s, the British government began interning Germans who were living in Britain.[110] Some Kinder over the age of

[107] Baumel-Schwartz, *Never Look Back*, 159.
[108] AJR Refugee Voices, Harvey Ottman Interview, 23-25.
[109] Kestenberg and Kahn. *Children Surviving Persecution,* 61.
[110] Baumel-Schwartz, *Never Look Back*, 174.

sixteen, especially young men, were included in this program of incarceration; about ten percent of Kinder were interned in 1940.[111] Also, 80% of the internees were Jewish refugees.[112] The largest and most famous of the internment camps was the Isle of Man, which was a semi-autonomous province of the UK that controlled its own domestic policy except in wartime.[113] The reasons given by the government for internment were as follows: most refugees were unemployed and were thus a drain on the government; the aliens may not be safe during air raids due to xenophobia in communities; many refugees were alarmed by hostilities and had requested to be interned; and military authorities had advised the internment of aliens.[114] The internees experienced many hardships, and some were deported to Canada or Australia, where they were treated as prisoners until the camp officials realized that they actually needed refugee status.[115]

All German and Austrian aliens living in Britain went before a tribunal that determined which type of alien they were. There were three categories: category "A" aliens were considered dangerous to the state and the war effort and were therefore interned; category "B" aliens were not viewed as immediately dangerous and were not interned at first but they had a curfew and other restrictions; and category "C" aliens were considered friendly aliens and faced no restrictions.[116] Although the tribunals were meant to be impartial, many men on them had prejudices against girls working as domestics and unemployed young men.[117] These prejudices were most likely based on common misconceptions about these two groups; the girls were viewed as unintelligent and the young men were viewed as lazy. Unfortunately, some of the older Kinder fell into these groups. Category "A" aliens were usually young and middle aged

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[111] Association of Jewish Refugees, "Kindertransport Survey," http://www.ajr.org.uk/kindersurvey.
[112] Baumel-Schwartz, *Never Look Back*, 184.
[113] Baumel-Schwartz, *Never Look Back*, 183-184.
[114] Baumel-Schwartz, *Never Look Back*, 184.
[115] Baumel-Schwartz, *Never Look Back*, 189.
[116] Darton, Lawrence, *Friends Committee for Refugees and Aliens 1933-1950*, 70.
[117] Baumel-Schwartz, *Never Look Back*, 182.

men, while women were typically placed in categories "B" and "C." Women were viewed as less of a threat because they were far less likely to be trained as soldiers or engage in subterfuge. Also, men may have been viewed as more engaged in politics and nationalistic, as men occupied the public sphere while women were regulated to the home. This sexist separation may have saved many women from the distress of the interment camps.

The intense fear of all foreign aliens that permeated the population continued to grow after Norway fell in 1940 and the threat of a German invasion increased.[118] In response to this perceived threat, Prime Minister Winston Churchill and his new British government created "protected zones" along the southern and eastern coasts of England, in which they rounded up all German and Austrian men over the age of sixteen and interned them without tribunal sentencing. This included some Kinder, many of whom were part of the Youth Aliyah, which was a program that saved young Jews from Nazi Europe and prepared them for resettlement in Palestine. As the war progressed and the threat of a German invasion became more pronounced, the rate of internment of "alien" men and women began to rise. Eventually, all category "B" women along with category "B" and "C" men from Germany and Austria were interned, regardless of their status as friendly aliens.[119]

In the internment camps, many suffered from lack of beds, food, medical care, and education.[120] A good portion of the internees were young men who had not had the opportunity to finish their education; yet many distinguished intellectuals were also interned and donated their time and expertise in order to continue the boys' schooling. Rabbi Schönfeld, who organized multiple kindertransports with his own resources, petitioned the Home Office so he

[118] Baumel-Schwartz, *Never Look Back*, 183.
[119] Baumel-Schwartz, *Never Look Back*, 183.
[120] Baumel-Schwartz, *Never Look Back*, 185-186.

could tour the camps and assist the Orthodox Jews who were struggling to keep kosher and practice their religion in the way to which they were accustomed.

Some Kinder interviewed for the Association of Jewish Refugees-Refugee Voices Program recounted their experiences with the tribunals and internment. Gertraud Murray and her mother were classified as category "C" aliens and were considered refugees from Nazi oppression.[121] Henry Wuga's experience is an extreme example of the British government's mistreatment of the Kinder in the context of interment.[122] He forgot to register with the police when he turned sixteen, and he was accused on communicating with the enemy via letters to his parents. These accusations caused him to be classified as a category "A" alien and interned at Donaldson School in Edinburgh, which was mainly used as an internment camp for German sailors at that time. Unsurprisingly, he experienced antisemitism and felt very unsafe. He was later moved to Warth's Mills internment camp, where he experienced poor conditions and harsh treatment, and then he was moved to the Isle of Man before eventually being released. Eli Fachler recalls his life being traumatically altered when his friends were interned, and Steven Mendelsson remembers being bounced around to different foster homes with his brother while his father was interned.[123] These types of experiences were common and caused further upheaval in the children's already tumultuous lives.

[121] AJR Refugee Voices, Gertraud Murray Interview, 20.
[122] AJR Refugee Voices, Henry Wuga Interview, 15-20.
[123] AJR Refugee Voices, Eli Fachler Interview, 36, Steven Mendelsson Interview, 29-30.

Chapter 3: The Aftermath and Memory of the War

Experiences of the Kinder After the End of the War Through Present Day

Introduction

The Kindertransportees' lives began to change drastically as they approached adulthood and the war ended. Remaining internees were released, families were reunited, and Kinder received news concerning the fates of their relatives. Although Kinder were originally expected to return to their home country after the war, Britain acknowledged that this was now virtually impossible because of the widespread destruction of Germany and the terrible acts committed by the Nazis. There were also problems with the children's guardianship with regard to their foster parents, birth parents or relatives. As the Kinder gradually transitioned from childhood to adulthood, they pursued higher education, entered the work force, joined the military effort during the war, and started families of their own. Signs of post-traumatic stress began to accumulate because of the trauma of the transports, foster homes, internment, evacuation, and coming of age in a time of war.

The War's End

The end of the war brought about many changes for British society as the true horrors of the Holocaust were brought to light. The Kinder began to receive news of their families' fates usually through the Red Cross or friends and surviving family members, and much of the news was horrific. Every interview and memoir that I have come across in my research recorded the loss of at least one close family member, with most losing multiple family members and friends. It is believed that about 54 percent of children's parents were killed.[124]

Even as this terrible news came in from the former Nazi Reich, some were reunited with family members. However, these reunions were not always happy; some Kinder were very

[124] Association of Jewish Refugees, "Kindertransport Survey," http://www.ajr.org.uk/kindersurvey.

young when they left their homes and could barely remember or had repressed the memories of their family. Some Kinder preferred to stay with their foster family because they had lived with them for years and had formed familial relationships. Kestenberg discusses how the children's resentment of their families for "abandoning" them could have erased the memory of them, especially if the Kinder were very young at the time of the transport.[125] Charlotte Kahn sets up the framework for how children responded to the transports and other persecution in the book *Children Surviving Persecution*.[126] She points out that children were not able to cope with the trauma of the transports because they had not experienced much prior stress in their lives prior to 1935. This inability to cope with high levels of stress caused the transports to lead to other psychological problems. The younger the child was on the transports, the worse the psychological effects.[127] These reunions could also cause the parents to experience resentment towards their children; they were surprised by their children's ungratefulness and how much they had grown, changed, and Anglicized during the war. One Kind, Fanni Bogdanow from Düsseldorf reunited with her parents in August 1947, but stated, "[her] real life started when I came to England."[128] Occasionally, the Kinder took on a caring role because they viewed their parents as damaged or tried to shelter them from hardship. Gertraud Murray, a Kind from a nonreligious household in Vienna, protected her mother from the news that her father had been interned in France and then deported to Auschwitz where he died.[129]

During and after the war, most Kinder over the age of fourteen looked for work or tried to join the military in some capacity. In 1939, the RCM and the Home Office set some conditions for companies to follow as they hired Kinder: job placement could not be prejudicial to British

[125] Kestenberg and Kahn, *Children Surviving Persecution*, 170.
[126] Kestenberg and Kahn, *Children Surviving Persecution*, 103.
[127] Kestenberg and Kahn, *Children Surviving Persecution*, 104.
[128] AJR Refugee Voices, Fanni Bogdanow Interview, 15 and 28.
[129] AJR Refugee Voices, Gertraud Murray Interview, 24.

labor; working conditions should be equal to those offered to British workers; the job should provide real training; and the job should have been specially created for refugees to not take opportunities away from British workers.[130] Refugees were typically placed in blue-collar jobs; many worked for their foster families or in factories, wharfs, Jewish businesses or organizations, and on farms.[131] For example, Fay Shaw, a Kind from Leipzig who came from an Orthodox, Zionist family, found work helping the war effort by sewing gas masks.[132] Many young men and some young women fervently wanted to join the Allied forces to show their gratitude towards Britain and their hatred towards Germany, but at first the British government limited their participation. They were mainly allowed to join the Auxiliary Military Pioneer Corps, and it took until 1943 for all areas of the military, except the Signals, to be open to refugees.[133] Some Kinder joined the Jewish Brigade, while others worked as interpreters; women could mainly join the Women's Auxiliary Territorial Service. Prior to 1943, there were over 250 male Kinder in the Pioneer Corps and 80 female Kinder in the Auxiliary Territorial Service.[134] After Britain opened more military forces to the Kinder, many girls worked as military nurses, and 222 boys joined the forces in multiple capacities. Stefan Udo Ruff was a member of the Officer Training Corps at university, and Rudolf Goldberg joined the Jewish Brigade in 1945, visited Bergen-Belsen while on tour, and worked as interpreter in a German POW camp.[135] In some cases, the military was used as a temporary support by Kinder, and service could be followed by depression and a lack of direction in their careers and lives.[136]

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[130] CBFWJR/RCM Documents, "First Annual Report 1939," 153/16.
[131] Turner, *And the Policeman Smiled*, 217; Association of Jewish Refugees, *Refugee Voices*, audio and transcripts of voice interviews.
[132] AJR Refugee Voices, Fay Shaw Interview, 22.
[133] Turner, *And the Policeman Smiled*, 203-213.
[134] CBFWJR/RCM Documents, "Third Annual Report 1941," 153/51.
[135] AJR Refugee Voices, Stefan Udo Ruff Interview, 28 and Rudolf Goldberg Interview, 14-19.
[136] Kestenberg and Kahn, *Children Surviving Persecution*, 170.

Psychological Effects

Although the Kinder were saved from persecution, violence, and even murder, most experienced negative affects before, during, and after the transports. Many Kinder lost friends and watched as their fathers and other family members were imprisoned or abused before they left for England. Fear and anxiety, mixed with excitement in some cases, was the general atmosphere on the transports. Marga Brodie, a Kind from Wettesingen, Germany, recalls being surrounded by crying children who were later comforted by a kind woman who distributed food.[137] Steven Mendelsson, from Breslau, used humor as a defense mechanism, and recalls wearing layers of clothes and calls the transport a "fantastic experience."[138] However, many Kinder were traumatized by being sent away from their families to an unknown country, and some resented their parents for sending them away. The trauma did not end after the transports; some Kinder were mistreated by their foster families or hostel staff, and their experiences on the transports were rarely addressed, causing strain that lasted throughout their lives. The Kinder were also stressed about the state of their parents and families they had left behind; some were even petitioning the government to let their parents or relatives emigrate or trying to find them jobs in their community. Their inability to continue to practice their religion as they had in their home countries also caused stress and created tensions in the community.

Many of the Kinder interviewed by the AJR for the Refugee Voices Collection recognized that the transports psychologically affected them. Berta Klipstein, a Kind from Poland who has always had an intense focus on education, said that her experiences affected her personality; she generally feels better when she's busy, and she enjoys frequent isolation.[139] Gertrude Goldberg, a Kind from Vienna who escaped on one of Rabbi Schönfeld's

[137] AJR Refugee Voices, Marga Brodie Interview, 24-25.
[138] AJR Refugee Voices, Steven Mendelsson Interview, 12 and 20-21.
[139] AJR Refugee Voices, Berta Klipstein Interview, 61-62.

Kindertransports, identifies other things that stem from her experiences, such as spoiling her kids, not caring about possessions, and not being able to argue with people or voice problems with her husband.[140] Susan Einzig said, "I have become totally reclusive now," and acknowledges that both she and her daughter have suffered from depression, but she claims that she is comfortable in it.[141] Gertraud Murray, a Kind from Vienna whose mother escaped to England, father died in Auschwitz, and brother survived Dachau with severe psychological effects, said, "insecurity really hasn't left me all my life. In a way I feel very insecure at what happened."[142] John Subak-Sharpe, a Kind from Vienna who later became a professor, said that it took years to work through his anger, which he categorized as a "fault in [his] character."[143] The themes of abandonment and punishment for survival continued throughout many children's adult lives, impacting their ability to form relationships and causing them to work intensely in their professional lives to legitimize their survival.[144] Ruth Michaelis, who lived with an abusive reverend's family before she was moved to a nicer family, said, "I mistrusted people because they ditched you sooner or later, and important things they said could not be relied upon."[145] Bea Green, a Kind from Munich who now identifies as a Bavarian Jewish Brit, said, "losing the normality of childhood is an irredeemable loss."[146]

A potent example that illustrates the struggle between the children's past and present is the play *Kindertransport* by Diane Samuels.[147] The play focuses on a character split in two: Eva, a young child that is separated from her family and put on the Kindertransports to England, and Evelyn, a middle-aged woman with an aging mother and a daughter approaching adulthood.

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[140] AJR Refugee Voices, Gertrude Goldberg Interview, 30.
[141] AJR Refugee Voices, Susan Einzig Interview, 21, 24.
[142] AJR Refugee Voices, Gertraud Murray Interview, 17.
[143] AJR Refugee Voices, John Subak-Sharpe Interview, 54.
[144] Kestenberg and Kahn, *Children Surviving Persecution*, 170.
[145] Turner, *And the Policeman Smiled*, 121.
[146] AJR Refugee Voices, Bea Green Interview, 18.
[147] Samuels, Diane. *Kindertransport*. New York City: Plume, 1995.

Evelyn has tried to forget her past as Eva because of the trauma she endured; her daughter, Faith, does not know about Eva. As the story progresses, Faith discovers her mother's past and confronts her, demanding to know the truth. Evelyn's carefully constructed world is in jeopardy so she breaks down, hides in her room, and destroys the evidence of her former life. The act of remembering is so traumatic for Evelyn that she rejected her birth mother, who survived the camps at the end of the war and stayed with her foster mother, who encouraged Evelyn to forget the past. This was viewed as a betrayal by her birth mother, Helga, which matched the betrayal that Eva felt when Helga sent her away; "Didn't it ever occur to you that I might have wanted to die with you?"[148]

This quote was reflected in the AJR Refugee Voices interviews. Many of the interviewees questioned why they had been saved, and some expressed a desire to stay with their parents, regardless of the consequences. Although the play is fiction, it is based on real experiences of multiple Kinder. Susan Einzig, a Kind from Berlin who was seventeen at the time of the transport, had a similar experience with her birth family; her mother survived the war and came to Britain in 1949 expecting Susan to care for her.[149] However, Susan could barely support herself and her young daughter so she hid from her mother and refused to accept her back into her life. She also destroyed all of the letters from her parents because she did not want to be reminded of her traumatic past.

[148] Samuels, *Kindertransport*, 96.
[149] AJR Refugee Voices, Susan Einzig Interview, 10-20.

Transition into Adulthood

As the average Kind transitioned into adulthood at the end of the war,[150] their status in Britain was in flux. The British government had begun to address the problem during the war, and in 1941 the RCM instituted the Temporary Migration of Children (Guardianship) Act, which gave the Secretary of State the power to appoint guardians; these appointed guardians could act as such under the full extent of English law unless the parents came to the country and claimed responsibility for the child.[151] The RCM also created the Memorandum for the Consideration of the Home Secretary, which granted the right of permanent residence to orphans, expedited any possible reunion with parents, expedited re-emigration if possible or desired, opened the possibility of entry into Palestine, and helped with naturalization.[152] This memorandum attempted to address problems faced by the Kinder: dead or missing parents/guardians, no home to return to in country of origin, lack of visas for entry into other countries such as the U.S., and other bureaucratic obstacles. In the spring of 1944, the British government appointed Lord Gorell as the guardian for all underage Kinder.[153] This action was taken because the government saw the widespread destruction of the Jewish people in the Reich and realized that many of the children's parents might be dead or in no condition to care for them. The RCM addressed this issue by deciding to care for and support all Kinder until they reached the age of 21.[154] In 1946, as it became clear that the Kinder could not return to their countries of origin as originally

[150] The average age of the Kinder at the time of the transports was twelve; the average Kind would have turned eighteen in 1945; from Association of Jewish Refugees, "Kindertransport Survey." When the RCM disbanded in 1948, the majority of Kinder had reached legal adulthood; from Baumel-Schwartz, *Never Look Back*, 219.
[151] CBFWJR/RCM Documents, "Temporary Migration of Children (Guardianship) Act 1941," 158/1-2.
[152] CBFWJR/RCM Documents, "Refugee Children's Movement Ltd: Memorandum for the Consideration of the Home Secretary," 159/1-3.
[153] Baumel-Schwartz, *Never Look Back*, 208.
[154] Baumel-Schwartz, *Never Look Back*, 219.

intended, Britain offered citizenship to the Kinder and other young refugees under the age of fifteen whose parents had been murdered.[155]

Although many Kinder became British citizens, very few identified themselves as English. They were no longer German, Austrian, Polish, or Czech, but they could not or would not be fully accepted as Englishmen. This was a common theme in the Refugee Voices Interviews; those who had kept their religion identified as Jewish first and British second while pushing back against or completely rejecting their childhood nationality. Some Kinder mentioned that they can no longer trust any Germans and that they do not feel safe in Germany or their countries of origin; "the German character will never change."[156] Ingeberg Little illustrates this idea by saying, "I was German but it's an accident of birth."[157] Berta Klipstein identifies as British but does not feel fully accepted by the British people because of her foreign accent,[158] and Stefan Udo Ruff has both British and Austrian citizenship, but does not think of himself as British.[159] Multiple Kinder visited their hometowns, either to seek out information on relatives or in an attempt to heal, and many mentioned avoiding the older generation when visiting their countries of origin.[160]

The Kinder typically have a difficult relationship with Judaism because they went from their Jewish homes to usually Christian foster homes.[161] Although some Kinder were allowed to continue practicing their religion, it was nearly impossible to celebrate Jewish holidays with their families trapped in the Reich or unable to get into Britain. Fay Shaw's interview illustrates a common theme; she mentions that her relationship with religion changed because of the trauma

[155] Hodge, *Rescuing the Children*, 41.
[156] AJR Refugee Voices, Fay Shaw Interview, 47-48.
[157] AJR Refugee Voices, Ingeberg Little Interview, 20.
[158] AJR Refugee Voices, Berta Klipstein Interview, 62.
[159] AJR Refugee Voices, Stefan Udo Ruff Interview, 30.
[160] AJR Refugee Voices, Alice Rubinstein Interview, 29-30.
[161] Baumel-Schwartz, *Never Look Back*, 219.

she endured, and she is no longer sure what to believe.[162] Some Kinder identify as Jewish culturally, but they no longer practice their religion.[163] Others, such as Alice Rubinstein, an Orthodox Kind from Hamburg, held onto their religion as a source of strength and comfort, especially if they practiced Orthodox Judaism as a child.[164] If Kinder were able to practice their religion in their foster home or hostel, then they were more likely to retain it. For example, Alice Rubinstein lived in a kosher Jewish foster home and then lived with her aunt, so it was easy for her to continue practicing her religion.[165]

An overwhelming amount of Kinder went on to have families. According to a survey by the Association of Jewish Refugees (AJR) 94% married and 84% had children.[166] Some Kinder felt that they needed to have children because they had been chosen for survival while many of their family members had been murdered or unable to recover from their experiences. This is a common theme among younger Holocaust survivors who married either during or shortly after the war. Having children offered normalcy in their difficult lives and allowed them to have a family once again.[167] Susan Einzig said that her daughter Hetty saved her life by giving her a concrete reason to live, even though the father was not in the picture and she relied on her foster mother for financial support.[168] However, there was occasionally resentment when Kinder saw their children having the typical and safe childhood that they were denied.

When it came to sharing their experiences with family, the Kinder took different approaches. Some took Gerald Jayson's approach: he purposefully kept his experiences from his

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[162] AJR Refugee Voices, Fay Shaw Interview, 26.
[163] AJR Refugee Voices, Ingeborg Little Interview, 25.
[164] AJR Refugee Voices, Alice Rubinstein Interview, 7.
[165] AJR Refugee Voices, Alice Rubinstein Interview, 15-18.
[166] Association of Jewish Refugees, "Kindertransport Survey," http://www.ajr.org.uk/kindersurvey
[167] Barnett, Ruth. "The Other Side of the Abyss: A Psychodynamic Approach to Working with Groups of People Who Came to England as Children on the Kindertransporte". *British Journal of Psychotherapy.* 12, no. 2 (1995): 184.
[168] AJR Refugee Voices, Susan Einzig Interview, 16.

children and questioned why they became interested in his story after 50 years of silence.[169] However, some acted like Alice Rubinstein and her husband, who was also a refugee: they were very open with their children and told them everything.[170] Other Kinder did not share their experiences at first, but when their children grew older and began asking questions they complied by telling them what happened. Gertrude Goldberg found it difficult to tell her daughters about the transports until she joined a refugee organization, and she was able to tell her grandchildren more easily as she came to terms with her trauma.[171]

Support Groups and Memory

According to Federica Clementi, the memory of the Kindertransports was a difficult subject for many years because the Kinder were taught to be quiet and grateful. Many thought that they had not suffered and should not be included under the category "Holocaust survivors."[172] There was an imagined hierarchy of suffering, and the Kinder were near the bottom of this hierarchy and therefore their stories were not viewed as important.[173] This was damaging because it encouraged many Kinder to hide or forget their past; the children's offspring, commonly called the second generation, typically found out about their parents' struggles later in life, causing them to question their familial identity. Some of the second-generation Kinder were not aware of their Jewish roots, or they had not known that their parents were Holocaust survivors.

Bertha Leverton, a Kind who noticed the lack of support groups for Kinder, decided to organize a 50th anniversary reunion, at which all Kinder were welcome to meet, mingle, and

[169] AJR Refugee Voices, Gerald Jayson Interview, 55.
[170] AJR Refugee Voices, Alice Rubinstein Interview, 31.
[171] AJR Refugee Voices, Gertrude Goldberg Interview, 29.
[172] Clementi, *Holocaust Mothers and Daughters*, 160-161.
[173] Clementi, *Holocaust Mothers and Daughters*, 158.

share their stories.[174] For some, this was their first experience discussing what they went through and their first realization that they were part of a larger group connected by similar experiences that came to be known as the Kinder.[175] At this reunion, they engaged in collective memory and commemoration, and many Kinder viewed this experience as beneficial and therapeutic. The reunion inspired many Kinder to write down their experiences, and as awareness of the transports spread, it began to seep into popular culture inspiring poems, plays, and documentaries.[176] For example, Bessie Barnett, a Kind from Flörsheirnam Main who now identifies as British, wrote a book about her experiences and gave lectures in London, and Berta Klipstein, a Zionist Kind from Bielsko, Poland who was a career chemist, wrote her story down at the request of her children.[177] Documentaries about the Kindertransports included *My Knees Were Jumping* (1996), produced and directed by Melissa Hacker, a second-generation Kind. This documentary gives voice to numerous survivors and tells the story of the Kindertransports in a poignant and comprehensive way. The play mentioned earlier in this chapter, *Kindertransport* by Diane Samuels, is a popular work published in 1995 that has been performed across the United States. Marga Brodie wrote a poem[178] about her experiences on the transport, and it is as follows:

His eyes were so big
His face so wide
His body so rigid
With shock and fright.
What was happening to him?
Why was he on this train?
When would he see his dear parents again?
Slowly, he lifted his face to see,
A carriage full of children,
No bigger than he,
Some silently weeping,
Some staring ahead,
Were they all dreaming,
Or were they all dead.

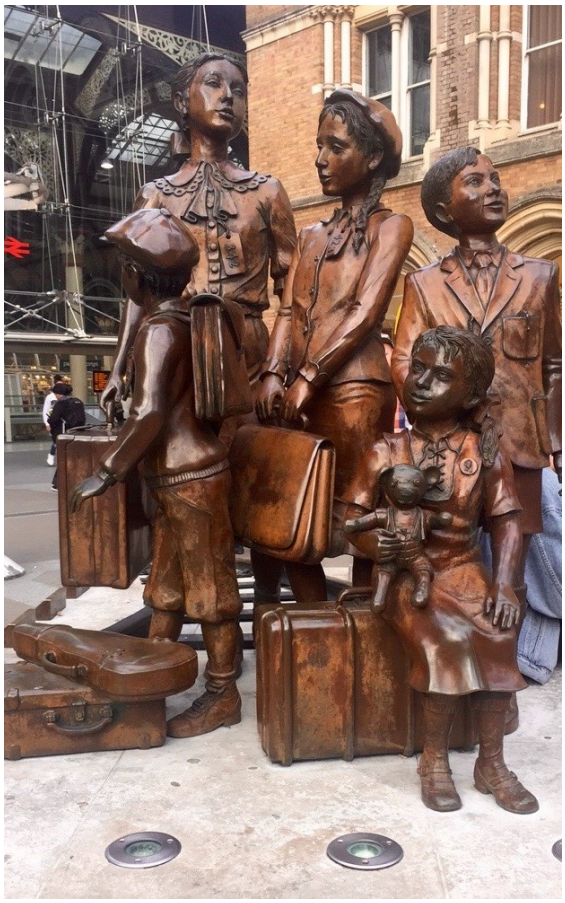
[174] Baumel-Schwartz, *Never Look Back*, 229.
[175] Barnett, "The Other Side of the Abyss," 104.
[176] Baumel-Schwartz, *Never Look Back*, 231.
[177] AJR Refugee Voices, Bessie Barnett Interview, 52 and Berta Klipstein Interview, 55.
[178] AJR Refugee Voices, Marga Brodie Interview, 24-25.

At last a voice,
A lady smiling so sweet,
I am sure you would all like something to eat.
She lifted our spirits,
Gave us new hope,
Perhaps there is someone,
To help us to cope.
There is a rumor
That we will be traveling by sea,
That too, is something new for me.
And so time passes,
I am full of fears,
Will God be able to see my tears?
We get on the boat,
With emotions so deep
From sheer exhaustion,
We fell asleep.
Next morning,
Nobody wants to get out of bed,
All fearful of what would be lying ahead.
Why did my parents send me, it is not clear,
I certainly do not want to be here.
From the boat we transferred onto a train,
And now we are on our travels again.
Our loneliness is painful
It breaks our hearts
We don't know the future
Only that we are apart.
I am told that with kind people I will be
But I don't know them
And they don't know me.
I am afraid that in time
I might forget
All that my parents taught me
Everything they said.
But I must always remember
What my father whispered to me,
Write in your heart dear child forever
That you belong to a Jewish family.

As the number of Kinder releasing memoirs increased, national commemoration grew as well, especially in Britain. In 1999 a bronze plaque was installed at the Palace of Westminster, and in 2003 a memorial sculpture designed by Flor Kent was unveiled at Liverpool Station.[179] This memorial was meant to house artifacts of memory contributed by Kinder, but the items were transferred to museums due to preservation problems. The memorial was replaced in 2006 with one designed by the Kind Frank Meisler and paid for by the Association of Jewish Refugees

[179] Baumel-Schwartz, *Never Look Back*, 232.

and the Central British Fund for World Jewish Relief, and it still stands today. It depicts five children with suitcases by train tracks (see illustration #2). There is also a plaque at Harwich, the port that the Kindertransports docked at after their journey from Holland, as well as sculptures in Berlin and Gdansk, erected in 2008 and 2009 respectively. Although many Holocaust museums exist and multiple museums house items associated with the Kindertransports, some Kinder, such as Susan Einzig, find museums and memorabilia alienating.[180] Perhaps for them it is strange to see items such as suitcases and identification tags similar to the ones they had, and this act of memorialization has made them feel disconnected from their past.



2. Kindertransport Memorial at Liverpool Station, London

3-4. Accompanying plaques at Liverpool Station, London

[180] AJR Refugee Voices, Susan Einzig Interview, 24.

In 1989, Edward Behrendt formed the Kindertransport Association (KTA) for the 2,500 Kinder who had settled in the U.S. and Canada.[181] The KTA describes itself as a "not-for-profit organization that unites these child Holocaust refugees and their descendants."[182] The inclusion of the second generation Kinder is crucial to fostering understanding, family unity, and continued memory of the transports. This group was formed to cater to Kinder who had emigrated far from Britain and the original Kindertransport organizations. Their website incorporates different types of work by numerous Kinder including short stories, poems, pictures, artwork, Q & A's, and memoir excerpts. The website also features events, such as the World Kindertransport Day on December 17, and resources, such as an archive of memoirs and films.

Separately from the reunions organized by Kinder, some therapists and researchers, such as Ruth Barnett, a Kind as well, organized group therapy sessions and retreats.[183] Barnett's meetings facilitated discussion of the transports that had the potential to lead to Kinder processing the events and the issues that stemmed from the trauma. Themes that occurred in the group sessions were separation and loss, survival, rage, resistance, and reenactment.[184] Barnett, along with her colleague Judith Elkan, identified that the children's family security before the journey, whether or not they were in contact with someone from their past while in Britain, and their age at the time of the transports were important factors that contributed to their adult mental state.[185] Many Kinder brought up the idea of how success in their personal and professional lives was necessary in order to justify their survival and the sacrifices their families endured.[186] Leslie

[181] Baumel-Schwartz, *Never Look Back*, 231.
[182] "Kindertransport Association." Kindertransport Association. Accessed November 17, 2017. http://www.kindertransport.org/default.aspx.
[183] Barnett, "The Other Side of the Abyss," 180-181.
[184] Barnett, "The Other Side of the Abyss," 183-187.
[185] Barnett, "The Acculturation of the Kindertransport Children," 102-104.
[186] Barnett, "The Other Side of the Abyss," 184.

Brent touches on this idea in his interview, where he discusses survivor's guilt and how this has caused him to "try a bit harder" in his life.[187] The second generation Kinder encountered difficulty due to the lack of grandparents and the silence that sometimes permeated their families; they typically expressed a desire for their parents, the Kinder, to be open and honest with them.[188] Of course, this was extremely difficult for many Kinder, prompting the aforementioned group therapy sessions, as well as individualized therapy.

The transition into adulthood was difficult for many Kinder, but most were able to become successful later in life, and the high majority had families with children. Although many Kinder were psychologically affected by their experiences and passed their trauma onto their children, those who attended therapy, group sessions, or reunions or wrote about their experiences were better able to heal.

[187] AJR Refugee Voices, Leslie Brent Interview, 34.
[188] Barnett, "The Acculturation of the Kindertransport Children," 105.

Conclusion

This paper has examined multiple aspects of the Kindertransports, focusing on the Kinder themselves. Chapter One discussed the background of the transports and the Refugee Children's Movement. The British Kindertransports saved almost 10,000 lives in a climate of Nazi aggression and when most nations were practicing tight-fisted domestic policy. Although there were Kindertransports that went to other countries, such as the Netherlands, Britain accepted the largest number of children and created an extensive support network to accommodate them. The examination of women and their roles in the RCM is important because of the typical exclusion of women from popular historical narratives. They played many important roles in the transports. Chapter Two examined the Kindertransportees' experiences before, during, and after the war, in order to gain a fuller understanding of their hardships to support the psychological assessment in Chapter Three. Chapter Three also discussed how the transports have been remembered, both personally and nationally, and how the topic was silenced for many years and then how it developed in popular and scholarly media. The play *Kindertransport* by Diane Samuels is a particularily strong source that gives a clear picture of the mental problems caused by the trauma the Kinder experienced and the reaction of the second-generation to what their parents went through.

The Association of Jewish Refugees: Refugee Voices Collection has been an integral part of this study because it supplied a wealth of first hand experiences of Kinder. Although these interviews were conducted at least 70 years after the transports occurred and memory can be faulty, they are still informative and illuminate themes and similarities among the children's experiences. Working on a subject that relies on memory creates problems in terms of accuracy, bias, and hindsight. Memory fades over time, especially because they are attempting to span

decades, and current biases created by recent events or family situations can change survivors' stories. Now that most aspects of the Holocaust are widely known and studied, hindsight can start to impact survivors' testimonies. Knowing what happened next and the context in which it happened could change how they perceive and deliver their story. For example, at the time of the transports the Kinder had some knowledge of internment camps and no knowledge about the soon to be created death camps; their current knowledge of the death camps could impact how they view their parents' decision to send them away. Despite these complications, survivor testimonies are one of the most important sources for Holocaust research.

Many of the Kinder were psychologically affected by the trauma they experienced before, during, and after the transports; for most, this trauma affected them throughout their lives and was also passed on to their children in some form. Reunions and support groups, organized fifty years after the transports took place, helped Kinder and their families acknowledge and deal with these problems, as well as push the Kindertransports into the public sphere of remembrance. They started to be acknowledged and accepted as Holocaust survivors therefore becoming part of the larger narrative, and they were encouraged to record their stories.

As the Kinder began to address their experiences and the problems that stemmed from it, they voiced many different questions. These questions mainly concerned survivor guilt, which is a common experience among those who lived through traumatic events while others they knew and loved perished. Some Kinder left behind siblings who died during the war, which is an especially potent source of sadness, and they question why their parents sent them and not their siblings. Many return to the question they asked as children: why did you send me away? Some Kinder interviewed in the AJR Refugee Voices Collection expressed a desire they had as

children to stay with their families whatever the consequences, although of course they did not know what their parents were saving them from at the time of the transports.[189]

I enjoyed increasing my knowledge of the Holocaust while researching this topic, but the process was difficult at times. Prior to starting this research project, I had never heard of the Kindertransports. I decided to become a history major due to my passion for learning about the Holocaust, so I was surprised that I had never learned about Britain's rescue of almost 10,000 Jewish children from the Nazi Reich. This paper has opened my eyes to the truly expansive group of people who fit under the umbrella term "Holocaust survivor," and how many people were affected by the Holocaust in some way. The most difficult part of this paper was dealing with the sensitive and emotional material presented by the numerous first person testimonies. Although the story itself was fabricated, the play *Kindertransport* by Diane Samuels was very difficult to read and watch. She portrays the destruction of familial relationships with a chilling poignancy. The research process was at times emotionally draining, and it was difficult to read multiple accounts of trauma and to immerse myself in their stories. However, it is imperative to continue to learn about their trauma; each interview holds great importance in helping us to remember what kinds of horrors are possible in this world.

There is a refugee crisis going on in the world today that echoes the Kindertransports of World War II. The crisis occurred because of the civil war in Syria that has been going on for over six years; it is a dispute between President Bashar al-Assad and combatants who want to take him out of power.[190] There is evidence that all parties involved have committed war crimes and have used civilian suffering as a method of war. Therefore, millions of civilians have fled from Syria, most of them women and children; Turkey and Lebanon have taken the most

[189] Association of Jewish Refugees, *Refugee Voices*, audio and transcripts of voice interviews.
[190] Rodgers, Lucy, David Gritten, James Offer, and Patrick Asare. "Syria: The story of the conflict." BBC News. March 11, 2016. Accessed November 16, 2017. http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-26116868.

refugees. Germany is receiving the most asylum applications in Europe with 315,000 in 2015, but Hungary had the highest proportion of refugees to population in Europe.[191] The members of the European Union committed to a voluntary system in June 2015 to try and solve the refugee crisis but the United Kingdom opted out.[192] This tactic seems similar to the Evian Conference of 1938. Britain has pledged to accept 20,000 refugees from Syria by 2020 with a focus on unaccompanied children in refugee camps.[193] In the year ending May 2017, 5,453 Syrians were resettled in the UK along with 1,507 grants of asylum.[194] Those refugees granted "humanitarian protection" by Britain are allowed to live in the UK for five years and then apply to settle there permanently. The Jewish refugee crisis before and during World War II was similar; quotas for the most desirable countries were small and many were stranded in unsafe territory. UNICEF estimates that there are eight million children, including two million refugees, that are in need of immediate aid. They illustrate this point through the following quote: "for these children, what's at stake isn't politics. It's their future. Having already lost their homes, schools and communities, their chances of building a future may also soon be lost."[195] The Kinder had also lost their homes, schools, and communities, albeit in a less physically destructive way, and their futures were similarly in danger. Charities and organizations have stepped up just as the RCM and others did, including UNICEF and Refugees at Home who describes themselves as "a small UK based

[191] "Migrant crisis: What is the UK doing to help?" BBC News. January 28, 2016. Accessed November 16, 2017. http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-34139960.
[192] "Migrant crisis: What is the UK doing to help?" BBC News.
[193] "Migrant crisis: What is the UK doing to help?" BBC News.
[194] Tisdall, Simon. "Europe seeks a long-term answer to a refugee crisis that needs a solution now." The Guardian. July 22, 2017. Accessed November 16, 2017. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/jul/22/divided-europe-refugee-crisis-italy-serbia-greece.
[195] "Syrian Children Under Siege." UNICEF USA. Accessed November 16, 2017. https://www.unicefusa.org/mission/emergencies/child-refugees/syria-crisis?utm_campaign=2017_misc&utm_medium=cpc&utm_source=20171122_cpc&utm_content=Syria&ms=cpc_dig_2017_misc_20171122_cpc_Syria&initialms=cpc_dig_2017_misc_20171122_cpc_Syria.

charity aiming to connect those with a spare room in their home with asylum seekers and refugees in need of accommodation."[196]

There were some problems with this paper, and many of the topics covered could be explored further in future research. This paper was limited in scope and could have been more expansive or detailed. It was also limited because I was not able to personally interview a Kind, although I did read and watch many testimonies. I attempted to focus on gender roles and differences, both in the RCM and within the Kinder, but that subject could be expanded as the history field strives towards a more egalitarian approach in research subjects. The subject of the second or proceeding generations was a topic that could be expanded upon as the families of survivors continue to grow. Discussing the transmission of trauma through generations could help in discovering new ways to treat trauma, not just in the victims but also in the people close to them.

The Kinder are a multi-faceted group of Jewish Holocaust survivors who are grateful to Britain, but suffer from post-traumatic stress, fear of abandonment, depression, and other psychological issues. The 50-year Kindertransport reunion helped many Kinder start to address these problems and pushed the transports into the national conversation about the Holocaust. Scholars of history, psychology, and gender can learn much from this topic, and research needs to continue to expand to address how gender affected the experiences of the Kinder and the transmission of trauma to second-generation Kinder.

> Accept reality courageously, don't recoil, don't step back, say yes to life.
>
> –Bea Green, *AJR Refugee Voices Interview*

[196] "FAQ." Refugees at Home. Accessed November 16, 2017. http://www.refugeesathome.org/faq/index.html.

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